Clay Geerdes' COMIX WAVE 153. © 1994. All Rights Reserved. Artwork herein is © the artists concerned and used for promotional purposes only. $12 for my next dozen issues. POB 7094, Berkeley, CA 94707. Make checks or MOs to Clay Geerdes.

Plus ça change; plus c'est la meme chose.

It may not have been the fault of the Los Angeles Police Department--the cops arrived late--but this was a mismanaged investigation.

--Mack Sennett alluding to the investigation into the murder of director William Desmond Taylor on February 1, 1922. See **KING OF COMEDY**. New York: Doubleday, 1954, p. 242.

In the novels of the 90s, character became an extension of technology. We got long descriptions of Ethernet, paeans to electronics and short descriptions of those who served the machines. Technodependency. Man as special effect. The computer was the new metaphor. One needed to *upgrade* one's thinking. It would be nice to *access* her secret file. Plug and play, baby! A Jack of all trades became a multitasker on line. Entertainment was all. The news was entertainment. When O. J. Simpson was accused of murdering his wife and her friend in June of 1994, major Networks interrupted all their regular programming to follow the police as they chased him around the freeway system in Los Angeles for nearly two hours. His Preliminary Hearing was carried live and discussed on every news and talk show. People were upset when they learned that they trial would not be broadcast. It was like seeing a movie and being denied the climactic scenes. Simpson was the new cover boy. He was on **TV GUIDE, TIME, NEWSWEEK**. The **NATIONAL ENQUIRER** came out with the story of his last film **FROGMAN** for which O. J. learned how to kill with a kinfe from a Navy SEAL. Everyone who had ever passed him on the street was selling a story about Simpson. Anyone who had even the remotest contact with him was followed by paparazzi day and night.

R. Crumb's graphic version of Franz Kafka's **METAMORPHOSIS** appears in the July issue of **ESQUIRE**. pp. 90-97. It will be part of **INTRODUCING KAFKA** from Totem Books. Call your bookie.

DON THOMPSON [1935-1994]

Don Thompson, certainly one of the fathers of comic fandom as we know it today, passed away on May 23, 1994, at his home in Iola, Wisconsin. He was 58. Most of you remember Don and Maggie from their "Beautiful Balloons" days with Alan Light's **BUYER'S GUIDE**. Don continued to edit **CBG** when Krause bought it and he died in the saddle, having his last editorial published posthumously. So long, friend. I'll be along one of these days and we'll trade zines again.

WHICH KING IS THE REAL KING?

I can't believe these people. Part of me thinks this is one of those controversies invented in the Press Relations office to promote Disney's **LION KING**, kind of like that story planted in the **NATIONAL INQUIRER** about Michael Jackson buying the corpse of the Elephant Man. The other part of me wonders about the new generation of writers and animators working for Disney. If they *didn't* know about Osamu Tezuka's **KIMBA, THE WHITE LION**, a 1965-66 tv series in the US, *why* didn't they? I know a few American animators and I would argue that they know the history of their medium and have reference books to look up what they may not have in immediate memory. So I am skeptical as hell about Howard Green's comment to the press that "none of the principals involved in creating **THE LION KING** were aware of Kimba or Tezuka [S. F. **CHRONICLE**, July 14, 1994, p. D-1]." What are they doing in the business if they are unaware of the work of someone with Tezuka's stature and why are they so casual about insulting this man in such a manner? I think the Japanese who are upset have a good case. In both stories, an African lion king is killed, leaving a young cub. In both the cub returns after a period of exile, overthrows the evil lion who has usurped his father's throne, and restores goodness to the kingdom. In both, the good lions are aided by a wise old baboon and a talkative bird, while the evil lions are aided by henchmen hyenas. The evil Japanese lion has one eye and is called Claw, while Disney's villain has a scar over one eye and is called Scar. The Disney promo department even swiped the image of the little lion cub looking up to see the ghost of his father in the clouds!

During his lifetime, Walt Disney was noted for putting his name above the title and leaving the name of his source for later on in the credits, but he did credit his sources. Felix Salten's name is on BAMBI. It would have been the decent and gracious thing for Disney's current people to give Tezuka credit. The story is a fairy tale standard with a lot of precedents in folklore, but a swiped layout is no coincidence.

TOASTER WARS

More legal theater of the absurd. Someone from the Jefferson Starship company has filed suit against Berkeley Systems over the image of a flying toaster used in a screen saver. Jefferson Airplane put out an album back in 1973 which featured a group of toasters flying through the clouds. This LP was called *Thirty Seconds over Winterland*. The suit alleges that the images in Berkeley Systems' **After Dark** screen saver are similar to those on the Airplane album therefore Berkeley Systems should pony up a royalty or be guilty of copyright infringement.

What a steaming pile of--er; what lawyer dreamed up this money-making scam? Who is likely to mistake a record album made in 1973 with a screen saver sold in the 1990's. I certainly know the difference. To my knowledge, Jefferson Starship is not marketing a continuing character in the form of a little flying toaster so there is no trademark infringement. Are they saying a cartoonist can't sit down and draw a flying toaster if he wants to? Bullshit, guys. I hope you eat that lawsuit and your lawyer bills you double for every phone call. The only similarity in this case is that both the screen saver and the album cover feature flying toasters and you can't copyright the idea of a flying toaster. I'm surprised the guy who did **THE BRAVE LITTLE TOASTER** hasn't gotten in on this. And wasn't there a flying toaster in that little underground video parody of **STAR WARS**, *HARDWARE WARS*?

Did you know that when you microwave food, it becomes something the body no longer recognizes as food and cannot assimilate?

In fact, when anyone microwaves food, the oven exerts a power input of about 1,000 watts or more. This radiation results in destruction and deformation of molecules of food and results in the formation of new compounds (called radiolytic compounds) unknown to man and nature.

PPNF Nutrition Journal V. 18, p. 3.

Just when you think you've seen the last **PROPAGANDA WAR**, another one of the little buggers shows up in the mail. Well, Clark Dissmeyer promises #13 will be the final issue, but, hey, we know Clark, huh? He'll have to say something about World War III and other future catastrophes. 50¢ and a stamp from the man at 2313 Central, #7, Kearney, NE 68847. Add a buck and get Clark's **PLANET DER ZUFRIEDENHEIT** and **TWO ENIGMATIC TALES**.

A happy childhood is the best deterent to art. Well-adjusted parents will do the trick. How many novels does it take to exorcise the abusive or insensitive distant parent? Does anyone doubt that Jackson Pollock enjoying smearing his shit on the wall when he was a baby?

R. C. HARVEY PUBLISHES HISTORY OF COMIC STRIP

If you really enjoy the old Comic strips, you'll be pleased with **THE ART OF THE FUNNIES: An Aesthetic History**, a well-researched history of the medium by Illinois cartoonist and historian Robert C. Harvey. While Harvey is technical in his descriptions of the art of masters like Winsor McCay, George McManus, and Milton Caniff, he is witty and down to earth when he tells the life stories of the people who created and made the daily and Sunday comic strips an integral part of our lives. This book is short enough to be read in a few hours, but there is enough detail to show that the author has assimilated the previous attempts at comic art history by Becker, Sheridan, Waugh, and is unafraid to advance his own theories and opinions about why the form evolved and survived as it did. Harvey is a careful writer. He does his homework and does not write about comic strips off the top of his head as certain quasi-scholars I might name. This does not mean that Harvey will not get an argument about some of his information. He gives Winsor McCay credit for all of the animation in **GERTIE THE DINOSAUR**, for example, and this is debatable. Donald Crafton suggests that the style of the drawings in that pioneer animated cartoon indicate it was probably done by the Bray Studio [**BEFORE MICKEY: The Animated Film 1898-1928**. Boston: MIT Press, 1982, p. 260.] It is possible, I suppose, that a busy man like McCay did all 4,000 of those drawings himself, but I've always found that highly unlikely.

Harvey concentrated on newspaper comic strips presenting a detailed history of the better known characters like Little Orphan Annie, Popeye and Terry and the Pirates and while this may seem a simple task to many, it is actually quite complex because it requires the author to have in-depth knowledge of the history of the times in which those comic strips were printed. The dailies are a mirror of the lives of those who read them and it takes someone who understands the social and psychological meaning of the times to explain them effectively. Harvey does tis quite well, including important background people like Captain Russell Patterson without whom we would never have seen strips like **THE GUMPS**, **LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE**, or **MOON MULLINS**.

Harvey says Bud Fisher's Mutt was short for Muttonhead and perhaps that is true, but I suggest an alternative. Fisher and his peers had to take Latin to graduate from High School and I suspect he recalled a bit of Latin when he named his character. Mutt comes from the Latin *Mutus*, which means dumb, but it could also come from *Mutonis*, the word for penis, hence Mutt is a dumb dick! Turn Mutt's head upside down and his nose becomes an erect penis, his moustache pubic hair. Sidney Smith picked this up for the chinless Gump and it was later copied by Jay Lynch for his character, Nard. This shift from bulbnosed characters to phallic noses was not accidental.

Augustus Mutt has an elevated classical name, yet he is a lowlife character whose entire life is dedicated to playing the horses. Augustus was Caesar's title and meant consecrated, sacred, or Majestic. To pin this on Mutt was an in-joke. A man like Fisher with aspirations to higher education--He started college--would have enjoyed juxtaposiing the highest and the lowest, knowing that his readers would get the joke unconsciously whether they could understand it intellectually or not. One of the reasons Robert Crumb's art made people laugh so hysterically in the late sixties was his technique of making overt what had always been covert in comic strips. Mutt and Gump and, yes, even Popeye, were all dicknoses, but Crumb drew a strip about a character who had a real dick for a nose. Such flagrant phallicism was an outrage to repressed or "normal" people, hence very popular with a younger generation in rebellion against parental values.

In **THE ART OF THE FUNNIES**, Harvey includes a chapter on Milton Caniff's **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**, a strip which I followed all during my childhood in the 1940s. I am sure this will be treated in a great more detail when his two volume biography of Caniff finds a publisher.

I recommend the Harvey history without reservations. If you do not find it locally, you can call the publisher, University of Mississippi Press, at **1-800-737-7788**.

On June 30, 1994, the California State Supreme Court said R. J. Reynolds will go on trial in California for seducing underage people into nicotine addiction with those phallic Joe Camel ads. San Francisco attorney Janet Mangini filed suit against RJR in 1992. It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy or smoke cigarettes in California and she charged RJR with enticing minors to smoke via Joe Camel ads and giveaways. Sales to children went from 6 to 476 million between 1988-92. Lots of money in the drug business.

On July 3, 1971, Jim Morrison overdosed on heroin in a bathtub in Paris.

YOU SEE, MA'AM, WE'VE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT YOUR SON HAD A PREDILICTION FOR ASSAULT RIFLES AND CRACK COCAINE. WE TRIED TO TELL YOU, BUT...
NO! BILLY WAS A GOOD BOY BEFORE HE CAME UNDER BOB'S INFLUENCE! OH, CURSE THE DAY WE MOVED INTO THIS PERVERT'S HOUSE!
SOB!

The Performance Art duel between Bob Cudd and Ursula Clamm in **CUD 7** shows Terry Laban to be a master of parody. Don't miss this one.

Pat Moriarity gets a tooth pulled in **BIG MOUTH 4**. Lots of whimsical stuff in this one.

You can get Steve Willis's **CATALOG OF OBSCURO COMIX AND OTHER STUFF** for 52¢ in stamps. POB 390, McCleary, WA 98557-0390.

Mike Stengl continues to publish poetry. His latest book is **HANGING WITH THE TOOTHFAIRY AND OTHER TALES OF LESSER BRAVADO**. $2 from him at POB 568, Trinidad, CA 95570.

HE SENT ME TO DR. FEELGOOD, A MAXILLOFACIAL SURGEON, WHO GAVE ME THE ONCE OVER AND HAD ME FILL OUT A WAD OF FORMS...
YEP... NO QUESTION.